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14 January 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: The Union of South Africa

1. The rise of J. G. Strydom to the South African Prime Ministry and to leadership of the Nationalist Party, which was forecast in NIE-72*, does not affect significantly the outlook for the Union which was presented in that estimate and in the National Intelligence Digest.

2. Strydom, 61, is a hard-working and experienced administrator, immensely popular among the Nationalist rank-and-file. He is a zealous advocate of white supremacy over non-whites, and of Afrikaner supremacy over English-speaking groups. His accession represents the rise to power of the extremist wing of the Nationalist party, and his administration probably will be somewhat less cautious than that of Malan. However, in pursuit of the apartheid policy, i.e., segregation and repression of non-whites, Strydom can hardly exceed the rapid pace of the Malan government, in which he served as a Minister. In his policies toward the English-speaking white groups he will be somewhat restrained by the views of the moderate wing of his party, and also by the need to preserve some measure of cooperation among all sectors of the white population.

3. As estimated in NIE-72, racial tensions in the Union almost certainly will continue to increase, though we see no likelihood of a mass revolt by Africans in the short run. Also, while tensions between Afrikaners and English-speaking whites will remain strong, physical conflict between these groups on any major scale is highly improbable. Strydom need not hold the next general elections until spring, 1956, but it is possible that he will call one earlier. In such an election the Nationalists probably will retain power, except in the unlikely

* The conclusions of NIE-72, "Probable Developments in the Union of South Africa," 20 October 1952, are given verbatim in Annex A.

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event of a split in the Party. Meanwhile the economic outlook for the Union is favorable.

4. International questions probably will continue to play a minor role in South Africa. In a year or two the Union might cease participating in the UN, if that organization intensifies its criticisms of South Africa's domestic policies. Strydom shares the Nationalist aim eventually to establish the Union as a Republic, but he recently stated that such a move would have to be based on a plebiscite or a special election and that the financial, political, and strategic reasons for South Africa remaining in the Commonwealth are still valid. In foreign relations generally South Africa probably will adopt a somewhat more isolationist stand, although it will strongly support Western positions on major East-West questions. It almost certainly will continue a cooperative policy toward the US regarding production of uranium and other strategic materials.

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